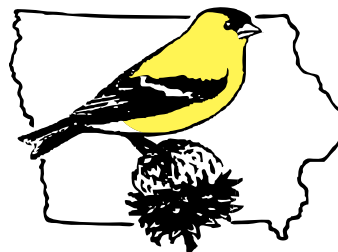


IOU News

Winter 2010



Volume 26 - Number 4



2010 Iowa Ornithologists' Fall Meeting

By Aaron Brees

The 2010 IOU Fall Meeting was held October 22-24 at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Jasper County. Refuge biologist Karen Viste-Sparkman was our host with assistance from Ann Johnson. Meeting activities were held at the refuge's Prairie Learning Center in the middle of thousands of acres of reconstructed tallgrass prairie.

The meeting began as usual with the Friday night social and registration. Drinks were served and everyone had a chance to browse the books (and owl shaped bottle openers) that were up for silent auction, as well as a selection of IOU shirts and hats.

Saturday morning began fieldtrips to Yellow Banks Park, Red Rock Reservoir, and various spots around the refuge. Sparrows seemed to be the highlight almost everywhere, while the Red Rock trips filled in the waterbird sections of the list.

The afternoon programs both appropriately covered grassland birds. Karen Viste-Sparkman told us about the restoration of prairie and savanna at the refuge, and the impressive way that grassland

birds, such as Henslow's Sparrow, have responded. Anna MacDonald, a master's student at Iowa State University, spoke on her research at Neal Smith NWR studying bird usage of prairie strips interspersed within agricultural fields, showing how even small areas of appropriate habitat will attract grassland birds.

Other Saturday activities included the IOU Board meeting and the IOU General Business meeting, the minutes of which will be published in Iowa Bird Life.

Our Saturday banquet speaker was Stephanie Shepherd, biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Stephanie spoke about Greater Prairie-Chickens in Iowa, from their history as an incredibly abundant game bird, to their extirpation following the onset of modern agriculture, to the recent reintroduction efforts and the status of the current population in Ringgold County. She also discussed the extensive habitat restoration

taking place in the Kellerton area and the value of the chickens as a focus and driver of these efforts which benefit many other grassland species. Stephanie's presentation drew many questions and sparked conversations about the value of prairie-chickens in Iowa and what their future may be.

Sunday field trips visited the same locations as the previous day and saw many of the same birds. Smith's Longspurs failed to put in an appearance but other grassland favorites such as Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Lapland Longspur, and Le Conte's Sparrow were found. The meeting wrapped up with lunch and the compilation which tallied 111 species for the weekend.

Thank you to Karen Viste-Sparkman and Ann Johnson for your work in organizing this meeting, and to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge for hosting us.

(Continued on page 3)



Karen Viste-Sparkman



Stephanie Shepherd



Anna MacDonald

IOU News

is a quarterly publication of the Publications Committee of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union.

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IOU News issues:

- (1) Spring: Published approximately mid-March, depending on date of annual spring meeting.
- (2) Summer: Published late June or early July.
- (3) Fall: Published late August or early September, depending on date of fall meeting.
- (4) Winter: Published late November.

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this newsletter was mailed to 392 members.

Attendees:

John Bissell, Grimes, IA
Aaron Brees, Des Moines, IA
Don Brown, West Des Moines, IA
Suzanne Brown, Evansdale, IA
Mark Carson, Cambridge, IA
Bob Cecil, Des Moines, IA
John Cecil, Des Moines, IA
Jane Clark, Clive, IA
Ray Cummins, Centerville, IA
Diane Dentlinger, Des Moines, IA
Stephen Dinsmore, Ames, IA
Karen Disbrow, Iowa City, IA
Linda Donelson, Iowa City, IA
Mary Doud, Boone, IA
Cathy Duffy, Indianola, IA
Tom Duffy, Indianola, IA
Dave Eastman, Cedar Falls, IA
Suzanne Eastman, Cedar Falls, IA
Bruce Ehresman, Ames, IA
Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA
Rita Goranson, Mason City, IA
Paul Hertzler, Mason City, IA
David Hille, Des Moines, IA
Gregg Hodges, Newton, IA
Rick Hollis, North Liberty, IA
Daryl Howell, Indianola, IA
Ann Johnson, Norwalk, IA
Tom Johnson, Mystic, IA
Dorothy Kelley, Des Moines, IA
Mike Kelley, Des Moines, IA
Karla Kenne, Algona, IA
Matt Kenne, Algona, IA
Cathy Konrad, Bettendorf, IA
Jim Konrad, Bettendorf, IA
Anna MacDonald, Ames, IA
Evans McWilliam, Paton, IA
Francis Moore, Waterloo, IA
Jim Murdock, Ames, IA
Jeff Nichols, Boone, IA
Wolfgang Oesterreich, Ames, IA
Bill Overland, Indianola, IA
Jane Overland, Indianola, IA
Diane Porter, Fairfield, IA
Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, IA
Billy Reiter-Marolf, Granger, IA
Richard Sayles, Blue Grass, IA
Leo Schluntz, Chariton, IA
Lee Schoenewe, Spencer, IA
Stephanie Shepherd, Boone, IA
Jim Sinclair, Indianola, IA
Tex Sordahl, Decorah, IA
Stuart Sparkman, Des Moines, IA
Susan Spieker, Norwalk, IA
Tracy Spry, Pella, IA
Carol Strohmeier, Des Moines, IA
Gerry Tetrault, Coralville, IA
Richard Tetrault, Coralville, IA
Cecille Thompson, Johnston, IA
Dennis Thompson, Johnston, IA
Perry Thostenson, Pella, IA
Fred Truck, West Des Moines, IA
Lorna Truck, West Des Moines, IA
Karen Viste-Sparkman,
Des Moines, IA

Species:

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup
Surf Scoter
Bufflehead
Ruddy Duck
Ring-necked Pheasant
Wild Turkey
Red-throated Loon
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Horned Grebe
American White Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Merlin
American Coot
Black-bellied Plover
American Golden-Plover
Killdeer
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Least Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Dunlin
Wilson's Snipe
American Woodcock
Franklin's Gull
Bonaparte's Gull



Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Mourning Dove
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Short-eared Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Eastern Phoebe
Blue Jay
American Crow
Horned Lark
Tree Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Sedge Wren

Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
European Starling
American Pipit
Cedar Waxwing
Orange-crowned Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Eastern Towhee
American Tree Sparrow
Chipping Sparrow
Clay-colored Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Le Conte's Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Harris's Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco

Lapland Longspur
Northern Cardinal
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Purple Finch
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow



Birding Area Articles

Have you been to a favorite birding area that you would like to have others visit? If so, please contact me about writing an article for Iowa Bird Life to share with all our members: Reid Allen, 7955 Wistful Vista, #20, West Des Moines, IA, 50266; or, by e-mail at: 2birders@hickorytech.net

Membership Renewals

Just a friendly notice that your I.O.U. membership dues are coming due and we really would appreciate everyone renewing their membership. Our organization can only continue to provide excellent publications if we have the support of all our members. You might want to encourage others to join our organization or increase your membership giving at a higher level. And, please note the survey question on your renewal form to help us assess interest in an electronic newsletter.

Report Your 2010 List Totals

By Paul Hertzell

Iowa bird species list totals as of December 31, 2010 may be submitted to the *IOU News* by using the form at right, or may be sent by email. Totals will be published in the Spring issue, 2011. Current Iowa records by state, county and month can be found in the 2010 Spring issue of *IOU News*.

For many birders, keeping list totals is both informative and fun, and generating these totals helps motivate birders to stay active, and perhaps to explore new areas. This process contributes to our learning more about the presence of birds in Iowa, which is a principal objective of the IOU.

The **Iowa Lifetime Total List** is perhaps the premier list, and is the list with the largest membership participation. The top six lists through 2010 were:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. 386 Tom Kent | 4. 378 Reid Allen |
| 2. 384 Jim Fuller | 5. 378 Richard Teatrault |
| 3. 378 Pam Allen | 6. 378 Stephen Dinsmore |

Another popular list is the **Annual List**, which is a roster of birds seen in the calendar year. An annual list over 300 is a remarkable list and has been accomplished only by a handful of Iowa's birders. Last year, the top five annual lists were:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. 300 Stephen Dinsmore | 4. 276 Paul Roisen |
| 2. 298 Jay Gilliam | 5. 262 Keith Dyche |
| 3. 281 John Rutenbeck | |

Other list categories are the Personally Found List, yard list totals, and individual county list totals. Some birders who keep multiple county lists also keep a running Total Ticks, which is the sum of all county list totals.

IOU News also publishes Big Day totals. A Big Day is a group affair in which participants attempt to record in a single day, in a particular geographic region, as many species as they can find. We ask that participants follow ABA Big Day rules and adhere to the ABA Birding Code of Ethics. Each calendar month has an Iowa Big Day record, and 28 of Iowa's 99 counties have Big Day records. The top five county records are:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. 173 Polk | 17 May 2009 |
| 2. 171 Fremont | 11 May 1991 |
| 3. 165 Woodbury | 08 May 2004 |
| 4. 154 Warren | 09 May 2003 |
| 5. 153 Kossuth | 14 May 2002 |

2010 IOU Bird Listing Report Form

Please return this form within a week or so of the new year in order for your totals to be included in the next compilation. Of course, **all categories are optional**. Contributed totals should be accurate as of December 31, 2010, and should adhere to the standards of the official Iowa State List (accidentals and casuals should have Records Committee acceptance).

Return to: Paul Hertzell, 1432 East State Street, Mason City, IA 50401 or send email to: phertzell@rconnect.com

Name: _____

E-mail or postal address: _____

County of residence: _____

Iowa State Life List Total: _____ Personally Found by Me in Iowa: _____

Iowa 2010 Annual List Total: _____ (Total species seen in Iowa during 2010) Yardlist Total: _____

Regional or Statewide Big Day * Totals:	Region	Date	Species	Names of Participants
<i>Example:</i>	<i>Dickinson Co</i>	<i>16 May 10</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>Ed Thelen, Lee Schoenewe</i>

*Record totals should be accompanied by the species list.

COUNTY LIST TOTALS			
_____ Davis County	_____ Johnson County	_____ Pocahontas County	
_____ Adair County	_____ Decatur County	_____ Polk County	
_____ Adams County	_____ Delaware County	_____ Pottawattamie Co	
_____ Allamakee County	_____ Des Moines County	_____ Poweshiek County	
_____ Appanoose County	_____ Dickinson County	_____ Ringgold County	
_____ Audubon County	_____ Dubuque County	_____ Sac County	
_____ Benton County	_____ Emmet County	_____ Scott County	
_____ Blackhawk County	_____ Fayette County	_____ Shelby County	
_____ Boone County	_____ Floyd County	_____ Sioux County	
_____ Bremer County	_____ Franklin County	_____ Story County	
_____ Buchanan County	_____ Fremont County	_____ Tama County	
_____ Buena Vista County	_____ Greene County	_____ Taylor County	
_____ Butler County	_____ Grundy County	_____ Union County	
_____ Calhoun County	_____ Guthrie County	_____ Van Buren County	
_____ Carroll County	_____ Hamilton County	_____ Wapello County	
_____ Cass County	_____ Hancock County	_____ Warren County	
_____ Cedar County	_____ Hardin County	_____ Washington County	
_____ Cerro Gordo County	_____ Harrison County	_____ Wayne County	
_____ Cherokee County	_____ Henry County	_____ Webster County	
_____ Chickasaw County	_____ Howard County	_____ Winnebago County	
_____ Clarke County	_____ Humboldt County	_____ Winneshiek County	
_____ Clay County	_____ Ida County	_____ Woodbury County	
_____ Clayton County	_____ Iowa County	_____ Worth County	
_____ Clinton County	_____ Jackson County	_____ Wright County	
_____ Crawford County	_____ Jasper County		
_____ Dallas County	_____ Jefferson County		
		County Total Ticks _____	

Iowa Birds Photo Contest Rules

By Tom Lawson

Participants

Any IOU member excluding members of the Judging Committee may submit photos.

Subjects

Still photos of wild, unrestrained birds taken in Iowa of species on the Official State List (including a new species if accepted by the Records Committee) will be accepted. Photos may be recent or old, digital or film, and color or black-and-white.

Submission

Each contestant may submit up to three photos with a submission fee of \$5 for each photo. Entries must be mailed (or emailed) to the Judging Committee within the date range on the entry form. Use the entry form from IOU News or on the website Iowa Birds & Birding (<http://www.iowabirds.org>). Submitters should indicate yes or no to the following (1) donate winnings to IOU Publications Enhancement Fund (for publication of winning photos), (2) allow publication of photo(s) in Iowa Bird Life or IOU News or display on the Iowa Birds & Birding website (Photos will be watermarked to prevent copying.), and (3) donate the photo(s) to the IOU for use by the IOU for display. See entry form.

Form

Each photo must be on 8 x 10 or 8.5 x 11 inch paper or mounted on 8 x 10 or 8.5 x 11 inch matte board or foam core. Only one photo per board allowed. On the back of the photo the following information is required: (1) name of species (common name), (2) date of photo (e.g., 6 February 2003), (3) location including county, (4) make of camera, (5) digital or film, (6) make and power of lens or telescope and (7) photographer. Other information should not be included. Neatness and quality of mounting will be a factor in judging.

Judging

The photos will be judged by a three-member committee. The time will be determined by the Judging Committee.



The judges may divide the photos into categories (e.g., digital—vs. film or passerines—vs. non-passerines). The judges will base their selections on quality of the photograph, view of the bird, difficulty of obtaining the photo (rarity of species, secretiveness) and quality of the mounting and labeling. The judges shall decide on the details of the judging process and their decisions shall be final.

Winners

The number of prizes will be based on the number of entries. Forty percent of the entries will receive a prize—1st, 2nd, 3rd and honorable mention as appropriate, overall or within categories. The entry fee money will be distributed to the winners approximately as follows: 1st 40%, 2nd 25%, 3rd 15%, and honorable mention 5%. The judges will determine the final allocation to best fit these approximations. All photos will be on display Friday evening and Saturday of the meeting. Photographers not wishing to donate photos may pick up photos after the banquet on Saturday night or make other arrangements with the chair of the Judging Committee.

Iowa Birds Photo Contest Entry Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

**Mail this entry form along with a \$5.00 entry fee*
for each photo submitted to:**

Iowa Birds Photo Contest Committee
c/o Tom Lawson
703 Prairie St.
Adel, IA 50003

**Entries will be received only during the month of
March each year.**

*Make checks payable to the IOU Treasurer.

Photo 1

Species (common name): _____

Date of Photo: _____

Location (include county): _____

Make of Camera: _____

Digital or Film: _____

Make and Power of
Lens or Telescope: _____

Photo 2

Species (common name): _____

Date of Photo: _____

Location (include county): _____

Make of Camera: _____

Digital or Film: _____

Make and Power of
Lens or Telescope: _____

Photo 3

Species (common name): _____

Date of Photo: _____

Location (include county): _____

Make of Camera: _____

Digital or Film: _____

Make and Power of
Lens or Telescope: _____

Please indicate your choices:

I wish to donate any winnings to the IOU Publications
Enhancement Fund for publication of winning photos.

Yes No

I agree to allow my photo(s) to be published in *Iowa
Bird Life* or *IOU News* or to be displayed on the *Iowa
Birds & Birding* website

Yes No

I wish to donate my photo(s) to the IOU for use
in displays.

Yes No

Addition to KIOWA Marsh Benefits Wildlife, Water Quality, Recreation

By Jessie Brown

EARLY, Iowa – This fall, waterfowl and pheasant hunters, birders and wildlife watchers will want to make the trip to Sac County to check out the recently expanded Kiowa Marsh complex.

While the new 55-acre wetland just off of Highway 20 has low water levels now to allow plants to take root, it's already drawing in wildlife and helping water quality in the Raccoon River basin.

Part of an effort to restore a millennia-old chain of natural marshes, the formerly drained wetland helps filter excess sediment and nutrients from runoff water. The marsh lies in the Indian Creek watershed, which feeds into the North Raccoon River basin. The Raccoon River, used as a drinking water source for 450,000 Iowans, has high nitrate, phosphorus and E. coli levels.

Ducks Unlimited engineers and the DNR restored the marsh by building an earthen dam and a water control structure to allow staff to manipulate the wetland's water level. Shallow wetlands like those in the marsh complex historically went through occasional dry cycles, allowing it to drain, re-grow plants and refill. The water control structure allows wetland managers to recreate these cycles. A fish barrier keeps out carp and other undesirable fish.

Upland of the new wetland, three new ponds catch sediment and nutrients before they reach the marsh. A new swath of prairie – 32.5 acres – reduces soil erosion, traps runoff contaminants and provides wildlife nesting cover. Estimates show that the project will reduce the amount of sediment reaching Indian Creek by 652 tons per year and trap 847 pounds of phosphorus.

“Kiowa Marsh represents another great partnership project that DU was pleased to be a part of,” said Eric Lindstrom, Ducks Unlimited regional biologist. “This successful project will provide high quality habitat for waterfowl and other wetland-dependent wildlife, as well as critical flood storage capacity and improved water quality benefits for downstream residents.”



Wildlife has already begun to make use of the new wetland and prairie habitat. “We’re starting to see more vegetation in the wetland, and that’s drawing waterfowl like blue wing teal and shorebirds,” said John McCleary, a DNR wildlife technician at the marsh. We’ve seen some painted turtles and snapping turtles and frogs. Amphibians and reptiles will benefit, too.”

That also makes the area attractive for hunters and birders. Jeff Kestel enjoys hunting the area with his son and taking his dog to run there. “I don’t think a lot of people know about it, but the amount of habitat and diversity of it is great – upland for pheasants, marsh for waterfowl,” he said. “When we create these areas, hunters use the area and everyone gets the advantage of better water quality

and protecting the soil.”

The 1,200-acre Kiowa Marsh Wildlife Management Area is located two miles east of Early on D-27.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Mark Gulick, DNR Wildlife, at (712) 336-1840 or Mark.Gulick@dnr.iowa.gov or Steve Hopkins, DNR Watershed Improvement, at (515) 281-6402 or Stephen.Hopkins@dnr.iowa.gov.

When Songbirds Don't Sing

By Matt Kenne

Bird song is a wondrous thing. What to a male songbird is simply a method to convey a message to neighboring males about borderlines between nesting territories, or to females about mating advantages, to humans is a beautiful expression of nature's glory. True songs, as opposed to contact calls and other vocalizations, are unique to the nesting season and its preparation, and are generally more musical and complex than calls used throughout the year to maintain contact with mates or flock, or to pass information about feeding opportunities, predators, etc.

For birders, bird song signifies the arrival of spring and new migrants. The songs also enhance our ability to detect and identify migrating spring birds beyond the visual conditions of the moment, so time and effort are regularly invested in learning bird songs through recordings and experience. Whether as artistic as those of a Wood Thrush, basic as the twittering of a Tree Swallow around its nest box, surprising as a Lincoln's Sparrow's, or as welcome as a Connecticut Warbler's on a Big Day, songs are an integral part of spring birding; yet I'm intrigued by the exceptions to the rule- the regularly occurring songbirds that don't sing in Iowa. The following songbirds aren't known (from my personal experience and spring field reports I've received) to sing in Iowa:

A few songbirds in Iowa lack a specific "song"- they don't have vocalizations that correspond to the treetop singing of a springtime robin. Cedar and Bohemian Waxwings, for instance, have only two call variations, but they don't sing a song. Farther along the spectrum, Blue Jays and American Crows are highly vocal birds with a wide array of calls used in a variety of circumstances, but still no songs.

Golden-crowned Kinglet- "Rarely sings during migration or on winter grounds." (Ingold and Galati, 1997). In contrast with the regularly-heard bubbly song of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, I'm unaware of this species' singing reported from Iowa. With some expansion of breeding south to Illinois, perhaps Golden-crown Kinglets will join Red-breasted Nuthatches in occasional Iowa nesting and singing.

Varied Thrush- With warmer days and increasing sunshine, a late-lingering spring Varied Thrush could be induced to flex its vocal pipes like its relative, Townsend's Solitaire, has been reported to do in Iowa.

Hermit Thrush- "Unlike other Catharus thrushes and Wood Thrush, rarely sings during migration." (Jones and

Donovan, 1996). In my personal Iowa experience, quite a range exists in the quantity of singing among migrating Catharus thrushes: multiple Swainson's Thrush songs annually, only three or four Gray-cheeked Thrush songs ever, and zero Hermit Thrush songs.

American Pipit- The "pip-it" calls I hear in Iowa pale in comparison with the long, ringing songs of territorial pipits on recordings.

LeConte's Sparrow- While late Nelson's Sparrows have occasionally been heard singing in north Iowa marshes, I recall no reports over the years of singing LeConte's Sparrows.

Lapland Longspur- Widely reported in field guides as singing only on the nesting grounds, I heard atypical song-like vocalizations among flocking Kossuth County Laplands in May 2010, inviting further investigation. Lapland Longspur's closest relative, Smith's Longspur, occasionally sings in Iowa under conditions similar to those occurring during this observation.

Snow Bunting- "Males begin to sing as soon as they return to breeding grounds in spring," (Lyon, Bruce, and Montgomerie, 1995). Snow Buntings are not yet ready to begin singing in March in Iowa.

Red Crossbill- It appears Red Crossbill singing might require nesting in Iowa from post-invasion pioneers. A late-April White-winged Crossbill was once found singing from the top of a spruce at Algona, so perhaps a wayward Red Crossbill would try the same?

Common Redpoll- "Calls heard throughout year including on migration. More complex songs... apparently limited to breeding season." (Knox and Lowther, 2000). I've no experience with late flocks of redpolls in Iowa, but the chatter of such feeding flocks likely consists of non-singing voices. But then again, you never know...

Ingold, James L. and Robert Galati. 1997. Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.comell.edu/bna/species/301>

Jones, Peter G. and Therese M. Donovan. 1996. Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.comell.edu/bna/species/261>

Knox, Alan G. and Peter E. Lowther. 2000. Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.comell.edu/bna/species/543>

Lyon, Bruce and Robert Montgomerie. 1995. Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.comell.edu/bna/species/198>

2010/2011 Christmas Bird Counts

Date	Count	Compiler	Contact
Dec 14	Jamaica	Ray Cummins	Raymond.madeline@gmail.com
Dec 18	Ames	Shane Patterson	shane7896@yahoo.com
Dec 18	Bremer County	Francis Moore	superfoot99@msn.com
Dec 18	Burlington	Chuck Fuller	cfuller989@aol.com
Dec 18	Cedar Rapids	James Durbin	durbinjames@imonmail.com
Dec 18	Dallas County	Tom Lawson	tom.lawson@mchsi.com
Dec 18	Dubuque	Charles Winterwood	cwinterwood@yahoo.com
Dec 18	Mason City	Rita Goranson	retag@mchsi.com
Dec 18	Rathbun	Mike Stephens	641-437-1736
Dec 18	Red Rock	Aaron Brees	abrees@hotmail.com
Dec 18	Shenandoah	Keith Dyche	kadd27@hotmail.com
Dec 18	Sioux City	Jerry Probst	probstsuebee@aol.com
Dec 19	Cherokee County	Dick Bierman	dbierman@mchsi.com
Dec 19	Davenport (Quad Cities)	Kelly McKay	309-235-4661
Dec 19	Iowa City	Chris Edwards	credwards@aol.com
Dec 19	Saylorville	Stephen Dinsmore	cootjr@iastate.edu
Dec 19	Waterloo-Cedar Falls	Francis Moore	superfoot99@msn.com
Dec 20	Buchanan County	Danny Akers	birdmandan1231@hotmail.com
Dec 21	Clinton	Kelly McKay	309-235-4661
Dec 21	NW Clayton County	Danny Akers	birdmandan1231@hotmail.com
Dec 22	Eldora	Mark Proescholdt	641-496-5219
Dec 22	Prinecton-Camanche	Kelly McKay	309-235-4661
Dec 26	Des Moines	Dennis Thompson	cgthompson@mchsi.com
Dec 26	Ida County	Don Poggensee	donpog@netllc.net
Dec 27	Sterling/Rock Falls	Kelly McKay	309-235-4661
Dec 27	Taylor County	Kelly Norris	kellydn@frontiernet.net
Dec 29	North Linn	James Durbin	durbinjames@imonmail.com
Dec 29	Western Mercer County	Kelly McKay	309-235-4661
Dec 30	Humboldt County	Jacob Newton	superbufanda@hotmail.com
Dec 30	Muscatine	Kelly McKay	309-235-4661
Jan 1	Boone County	Mark Widrlechner	Mpwskd@aol.com
Jan 1	Worth County	Curt Nelson	641-696-5600
Jan 2	Andalusia	Kelly McKay	309-235-4661
Jan 2	Desoto	Jerry Toll	geritol48@cox.net
Jan 2	Neal Smith NWR	Karen Viste-Sparkman	karen_vistesparkman@fws.gov
Jan 3	SE Clayton County	Danny Akers	birdmandan1231@hotmail.com

Surveying secretive marsh-birds in Iowa

By Tyler M. Harms

As birders, we all know that the secretive marsh-birds are some of the most difficult species to check off our list. This is due to their inconspicuous behavior and the densely-vegetated wetlands they occupy. Rails and moorhens are shy, skulky birds and bitterns are well camouflaged and don't vocalize that often. Because of these characteristics, there is little information about the distribution and breeding status of these birds in Iowa.

As part of my Master's degree project working with Dr. Stephen J. Dinsmore at Iowa State University, I conducted call-broadcast surveys for eight species of secretive marsh-birds at wetlands across Iowa. My focal species were Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern, Least Bittern, King Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Moorhen, and American Coot. My research objectives were to gain insight about the distribution of these birds across the state, to determine habitat characteristics of the wetlands these birds occupy, and to develop a survey protocol for future monitoring. The purpose of this article is to summarize findings during the 2010 field season, which followed a shorter pilot season in 2009.

I conducted surveys from 20 April to 15 July 2010 at 183 wetlands across Iowa. This survey window is an extension of that suggested in the North American Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol (15 April to 30 May). We extended the survey window in attempt to include peak breeding times for all eight focal species, which can range from late April (American Bittern) to mid-



Number of individual birds detected by species during 2010 survey season.

Species	# of individuals detected
Pied-billed Grebe	282
American Bittern	12
Least Bittern	108
King Rail	5
Virginia Rail	285
Sora	250
Common Moorhen	13
American Coot	954

July (Least Bittern). High winds were a common occurrence this field season, which caused a small loss in the number of days we were able to survey. Heavy rains occurring in different parts of the state throughout the field season caused higher water levels at some wetlands, thus potentially affecting the presence of marsh-birds at some wetlands.

All eight focal species were detected during the field season and the most abundant were American Coot, Virginia Rail, and Pied-billed Grebe (Table 1). A total of 1,909 birds was detected at wetlands in Iowa, averaging about 10 birds per wetland. The highlights of this field season were seven King Rails observed at various locales and a single Black Rail detected at Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge in Kossuth County.

With this research, I hope to provide species population estimates of marsh-birds in Iowa and determine where each species is distributed across the state. I also hope to provide valuable information on the habitat associations of these birds to guide future habitat management and wetland restoration decisions. I am also comparing the response rates of marsh-birds to call-broadcast surveys at different times of day and times of season, which may help me refine existing survey protocols to aid in the future monitoring of these birds in Iowa.

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